

**Senate Select Committee on School Safety Hearing on  
“Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity Discrimination and School Safety”**

Plummer Park- Fiesta Hall, West Hollywood

October 3, 2002

**Testimony of Alyn Libman**

After facing many years of verbal and physical harassment, often resulting in violence, I realized that I needed to empower myself. I had given up my power to my attackers and I wanted it back. I turned to activism after I heard Sen. Kuehl speak about AB537 at a PFLAG conference.

All through middle school, I was attacked by my peers for being gender non-conforming. I preferred masculine clothing to feminine apparel, my attitude and carriage reflected my inner masculinity that was in turmoil with my female body. In 6th grade, I was beaten up by two 8th grade boys who thought I was a boy. Instead of fighting back, I ran for help. The vice principal, upon listening to the story, 'helpfully suggested' that had I worn nail polish, had long hair, or dressed like a girl, the problem wouldn't have occurred. He suspended me on the grounds that I participated in a fight. The reality of the situation was that I got suspended for my lack of femininity.

The physical harassment in high school turned out to be slightly less brutal than it had been in middle school. Still, I was chased around a classroom with a stapler. I had death notes put in my locker. And I got kicked out of every bathroom on campus. While certain teachers tried to stop the harassment, most of them ignored the problem, even as kids shouted things like "fucking dyke" across the classroom.

At the end of first semester of 9th grade, I had an emotional breakdown. I couldn't deal with the pressure to conform, the harassment I'd been dealing with since kindergarten, and the stress of being 'different and alone.' I was normally a solid A/B student, but that semester, I got 5 D's and an F. I was suicidal, unsure of whether life was really worth living anymore.

My 10th grade year was eerily quiet - the harassment seemed to have disappeared. In 11th grade, I was attacked across the street from school by two students with knives. I reported the crime and this time, the administration worked with the school police to resolve the issue since I told them I was attacked for being transgender, even though my attackers thought I was a lesbian.

My high school experience greatly contrasts that of middle school. Rather than being blamed for the harassment, my high school campus has realized that instead of trying to change me, it needs to educate the students in order to prevent incidents like these from occurring again. They have been supportive through my transition; allowing me access to the nurse's bathroom, rather than forcing me to use women's rooms. While it is a step in the right direction, I still don't have equal access to facilities before and after school. My school identification now matches my gender identity of male, as well as my legally changed name. The administration realizes that

there are problems to be addressed, however, it is difficult to take action since not many people know how to deal with LGBT issues. Perhaps providing mandatory faculty trainings on AB537 and LGBT issues, educating the student body on LGBT issues, requiring all school campuses to have a support group for LGBT youth, and providing safe facilities for all youth would help address some of the issues schools face today. We have managed to make progress as a school, but until more detailed protocol exists on dealing with LGBT, and especially transgender youth, confusion on campuses across the state will prevail.